

# MEMORIES OF SIGNIFICANCE

Recent Works  
by

**Anant Nikam**

Curated by  
**Johnny ML**

Tuesday 28th January – Monday 3rd Feb, 2020

at  
Jehangir Art Gallery  
Auditorium Hall, MG Road  
Mumbai 400023



## SEED: THE BRANCHING ART OF ANANT NIKAM

Essentials manifest and the rest submerges in the vast expanse of hues, leaving vantage points for the viewers to make repeated flights of witnessing for eking out meanings or feelings that they desire to derive; that is the crux of Anant Nikam's works. An accomplished printmaker and a soulful painter, Anant Nikam explores his visual imagination and expresses it through subtle notations, capable of creating an ensemble of memories, feelings and critical thinking about life in general and that of the artist or in that case, the life of any person who witnesses these works, in particular.

Contemporary Indian art has been a cacophonous space, almost carnival-esque, capturing the apparent and magnificent, enthralling the viewers with a heightened sense of mediatized naturalism, leaving no space for philosophical meandering, but opening up locations where anything could be turned into a metaphor, forced or otherwise, therefore liable to be interpreted in multifarious ways. Nikam in his works stands alone in this carnival procession, at times giving away a feeling of him walking in the opposite direction with a serene and subtle ensemble of images, planes and spaces, almost decimating the overt presence of tangible and recognizable images.

That lonely journey takes a lot of courage for it has been a long, rigorous and painful one. Categorizations birthed by visual linguistic styles, with a fair amount of recognition and success often push artists either into complacency or into the fanciful display of arrogance, two fallacies that mar the growth and natural flourishing of many an artist, however have not shackled Nikam for his sheer determination in his artistic career interspersed with long hours of teaching and yet another set of long hours in his studio practice, not to push himself into one of them, interestingly not by changing style with every other season but with the sincere explorations that he has made in his works, the fruition of which one could see in the present body of paintings.

Nikam's works tell the viewer that any urban wood has a rural seed as its point of origin. The more they see the branches spreading, foliage gaining thicker greens, fruits weighing on the edges of sap routes, roots growing deeper and deeper, the more they feel the need to see the original seed, or that perennial itch to look into the cambium to count the orchestrated annual circles to stand in awe of the ages. The hues gaining density and losing it as it spreads on the canvas are like experiences of life disseminating slowly in the field of awareness, which exists within the heart and mind of the viewer. The geometrical forms, though tender, subtle and breezy, with no special effort from the artist's side to accentuate them to prove a point, take the viewer to the repertoire of artistic expressions that Nikam has been nurturing all these years in his career.





Untitled | Oil on paper | 12" x 12" | 2018

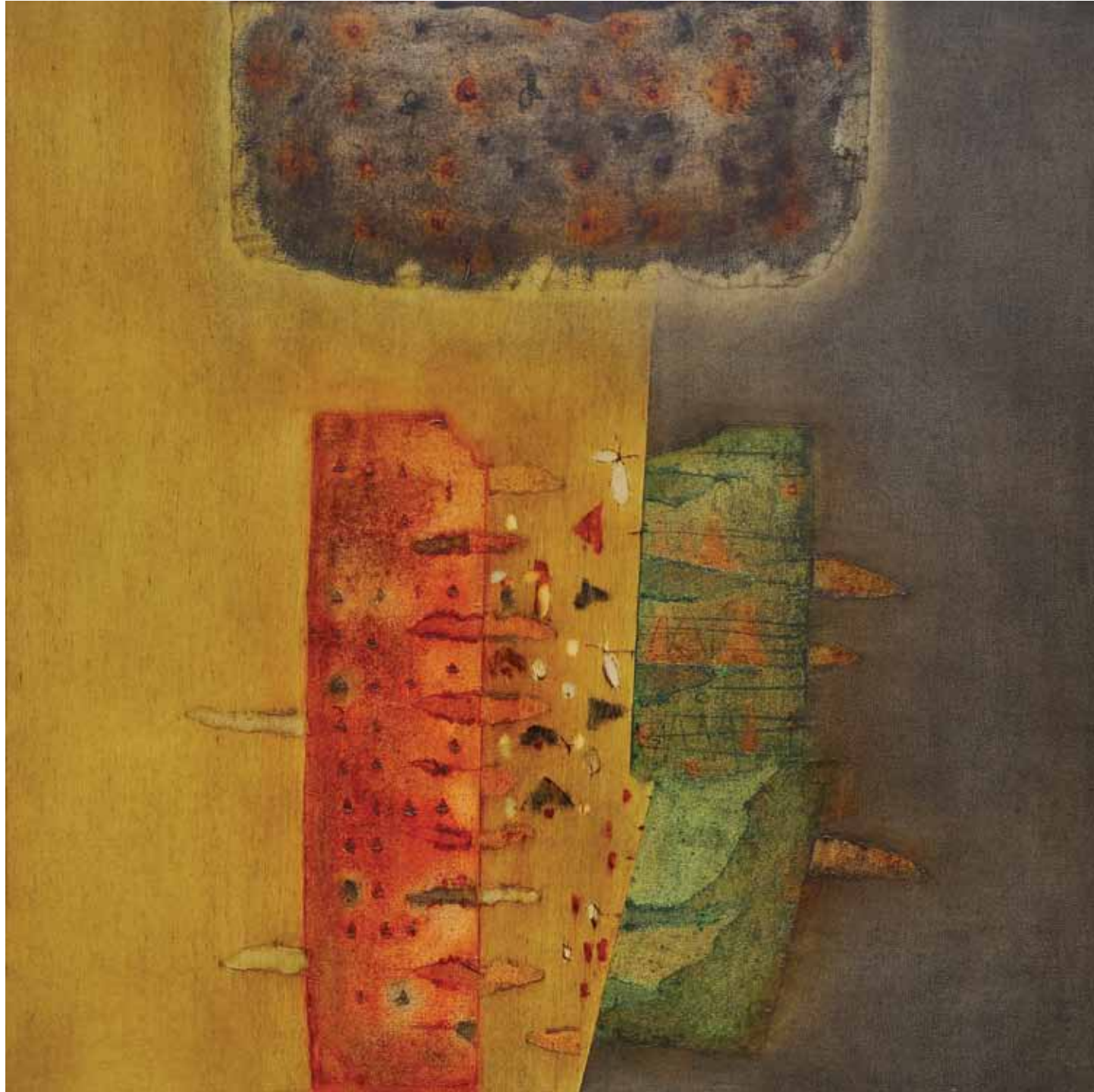
Ask oneself the meaning of the geometrical forms, especially that of the miniature triangle strewn all over in Nikam's works. This microscopic view into the wonders of the creative seed reveals that they are human beings, architecture, the paraphernalia carried around by the people in an exodus and the primitive memorial markings that the human beings repeat in their own terms using the available modes like a Facebook status update or a selfie. In the previous body, the seed factor in Nikam's works had been obvious to the extent that it had nudged him to explain nostalgia and reverence for the past. But in the present suite of paintings he has shown a transcended creative sensibility through which he could transform the indebtedness to memories and nostalgia into pure music of colors. He makes this presence artistically real by employing multiple perspectives.

Perspective, when spoken in the artistic context gets two different meanings; one the world view that the artist wants to present in/through his works, two, the formal points of view, the position of the artist and the viewer (their combined gaze, perhaps) vis-à-vis the images in the pictorial plane. The latter is a huge decision taken by the artist/any artist in order to vivify the former. Even when the art is not intended to be overtly preachy, thereby overlooking the former, the latter becomes important for the formal perspectives within the painting functioning as entry points for the viewers. Internalization of any work of art largely depends on the choice of perspectives that an artist chooses to build in his works. Nikam, with his many decades long artistic practice backing him up has become a master of multiple perspectives in his works.

One could see three main perspectives in Nikam's formalism. The first is a perspective employed by the miniature painters in their works. In them, the miniaturists employ multiple perspectives, often both in the descending and ascending views where the images and narratives appear in different perspectives letting the viewers get a stronger and wider grip on the 'incidents' in the paintings. So certain areas are presented in the eye-level, some are presented in the bird's eye view level and yet another view is from a combination of multiple perspectives creating a visual distortion yet capable of conveying the truth of the things in the painting more effectively than an enhanced naturalism. The second one is the perspective used by the Renaissance artists who thrived in illusionary perspective; or the make believe depth, which gives the middle ground of the painting an added distance so that the foreground is much closer and the background is farther away from the viewer. The third perspective is the contemporary perspective which is a combination of foreground and middle ground illusionism.

Nikam in his works, though his motifs are ethereal, employs all these three perspectives adequately giving an added vibrancy to the spatial expanse of the paintings. This animation created by perspectives is complimented by the colors that the artist chooses to work with. He is not a purist in terms of color. He believes in gradation of hues and tones as if they together represent the ageing of bodies in nature. Whatever be the color and its gradations, Nikam intends to make a mood and that particular mood is conveyed intangibly by the very witnessing of the works and further emphasized tangibly and directly by the aesthetically strategic display





Untitled | Oil on canvas | 48" x 48" | 2019

of perspectives. Therefore, a viewer gets the feeling of seeing and sensing a space, a mood and an occurrence through a series of virtual jump cuts. Some kind of an out of the body experience could come into play when one sees the plane suddenly from a higher angle, leaving everything down there as geometrical notations.

While being an avowed contemporary artist, Nikam also underlines his position in a historical continuity of global aesthetics that interestingly plays a larger role in his creative life as an artist and as a pedagogue. The precision of world renowned graphic artists like Albrecht Durer, the enigmatic capturing of the forces of the universe in lines by artists like Leonardo da Vinci, the use of multiple perspectives by the miniature artists of various Indian traditions, the earthy art of the tribal and folk artists, the craft of the minstrels who narrate folklore and mythologies have been functioning as a springboard for launching himself to the heights of imagination and the depths of feeling. Discerning viewers could see it all even when Nikam changes the sizes of his works.

Nikam mainly uses two kinds of surfaces as medium; paper and canvas. Irrespective of the mediums, Nikam indulges in textural experiments using paper strips stuck on the surfaces. The incisions, scratches and manipulations done on these additions, added with color come to be the meeting point of two major streams of artistic styles; painting and printmaking. It is a sort of attaining what has been apparently impossible. Here, Nikam uses the formal methods of printmaking for 'not making a print' but a painting. At the same time, he uses the painterly techniques not to make a painting as such but a print in the method of painting. It is interesting to see some of the works where this technique is employed as unprintable prints and unpaintable paintings. Perhaps, it is a rare achievement as far as any Indian contemporary artists who have a tendency to use multiple mediums to create a singular work.

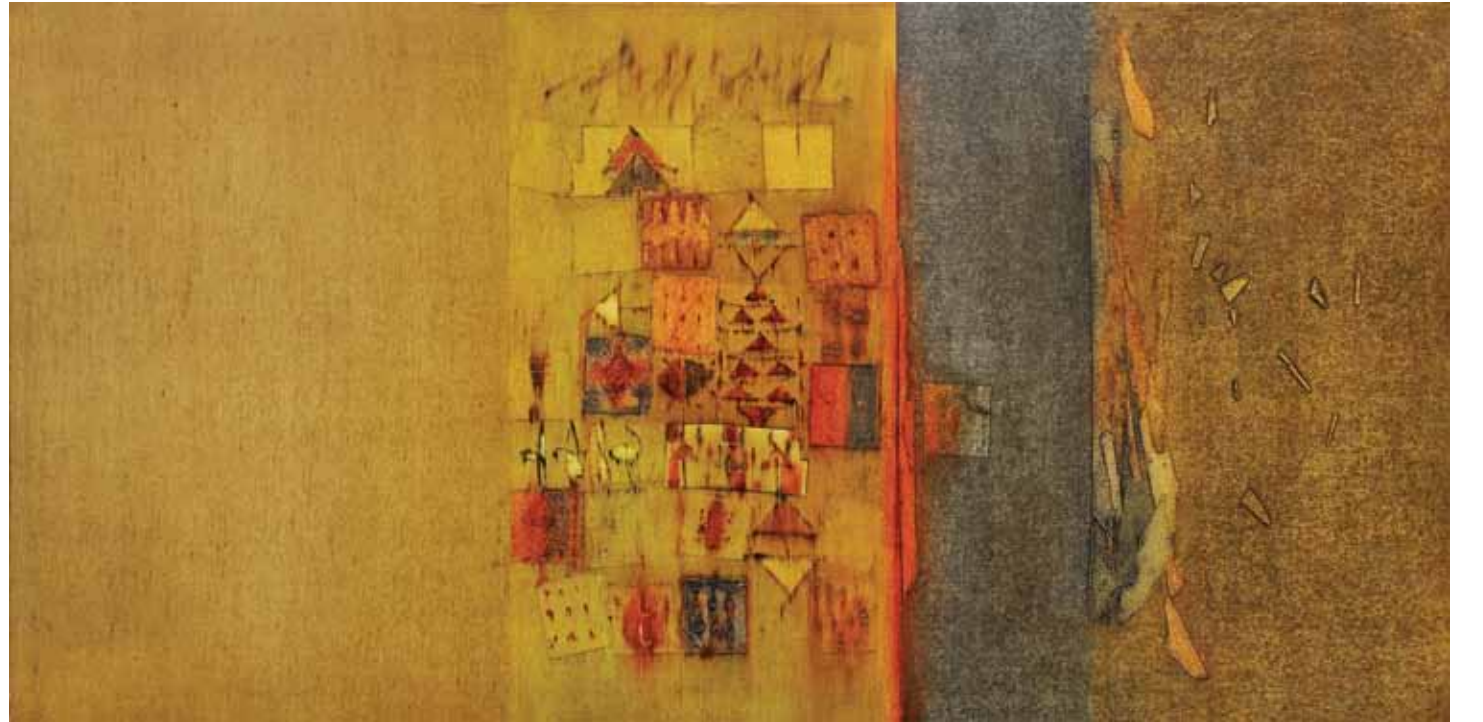
Paul Cezanne once said that he could capture anything in the fundamental geometric forms. Perhaps, the master modernist had found solidity in the geometrical forms that helped the images ground safely. Nikam's interest in geometric forms slightly differs from that of Cezanne because his aim is not to see everything in geometrical forms but to see how such forms have been the integral parts of the traditional Indian art that include the folk and tribal art. When he makes an assemblage of pyramid-like structures it is this traditional continuity coming to the fore; solid structuring included. But the conical form is to be seen as the form of memories, lived life, experiences gathered, journeys undertaken, places seen and so on, so that they keep the artist firm on the ground reminding him of the village lay out, rural architecture, trees and rivers, games and noises, dawns and dusks- the seed that has become the tree called Anant Nikam, the artist.

**Johny ML**  
Thiruvananthapuram  
January 2020





Untitled | Oil on canvas | 48" x 48" | 2019



Untitled | Oil on canvas | 30" x 60" | 2019

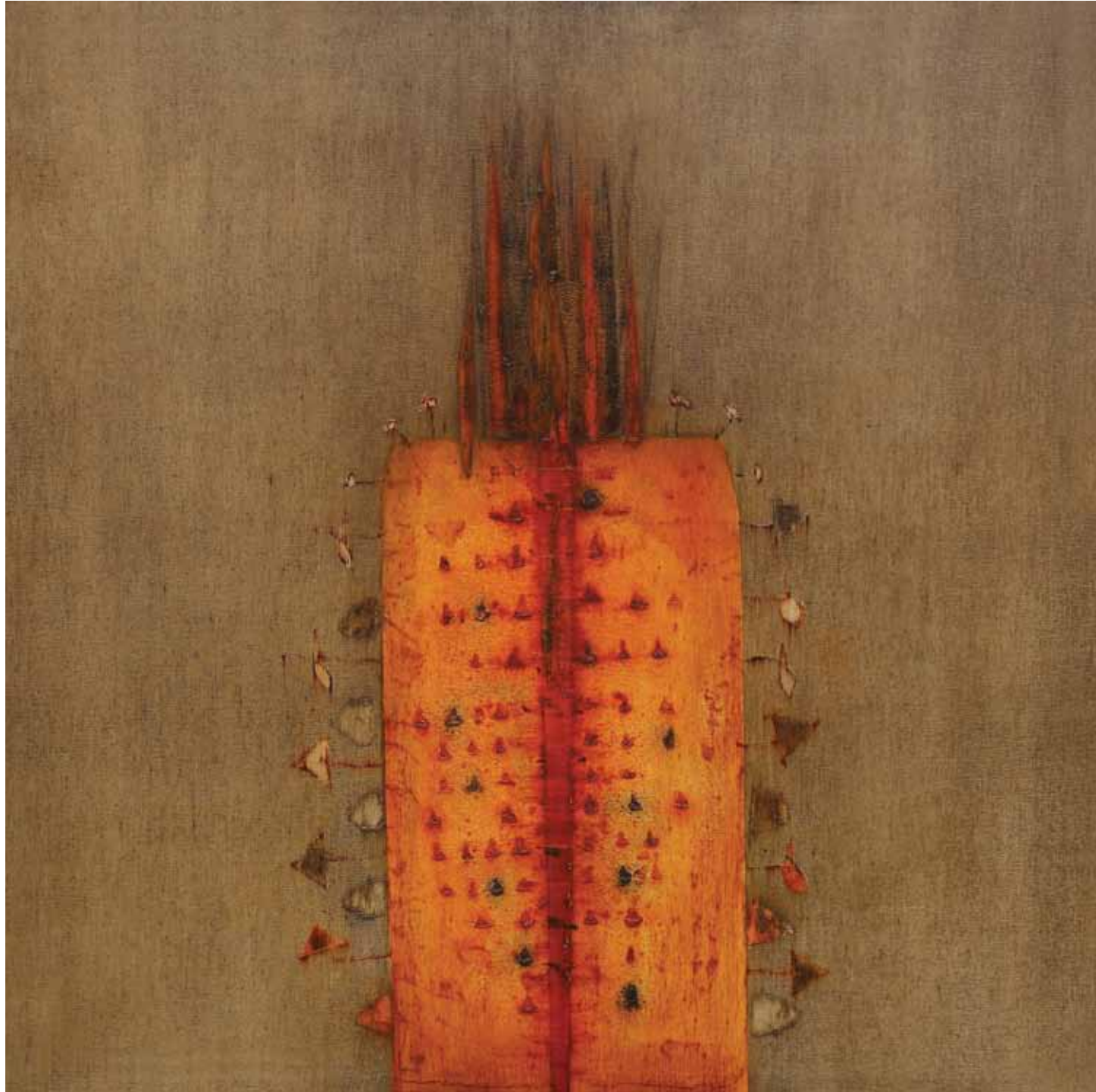


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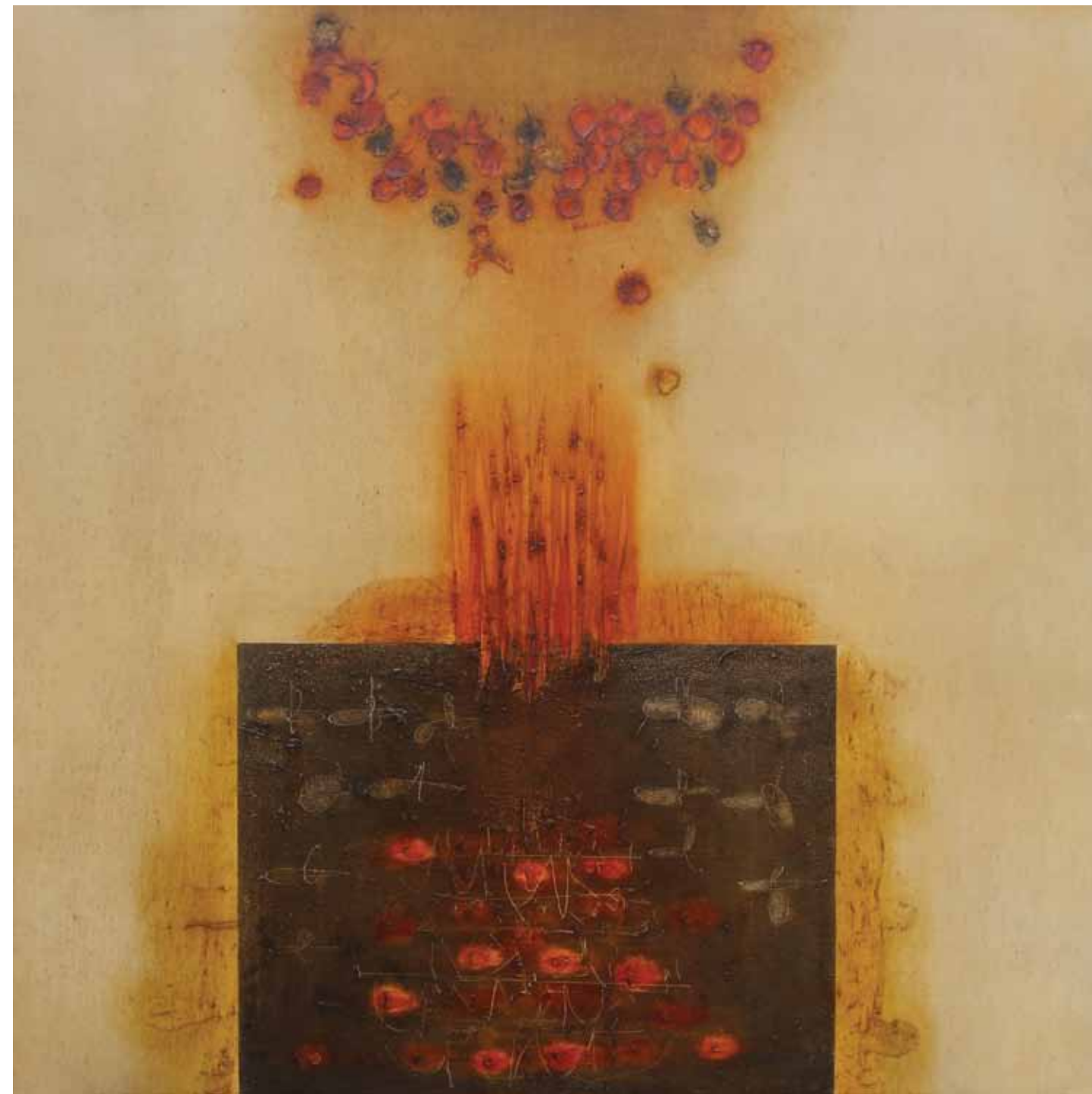


Untitled | Oil on canvas | 48'' x 48'' | 2019





Untitled | Oil on paper mache | 30" x 18" | 2019



Untitled | Oil on canvas | 48" x 48" | 2019





Untitled | Oil on canvas | 36" x 72" | 2019

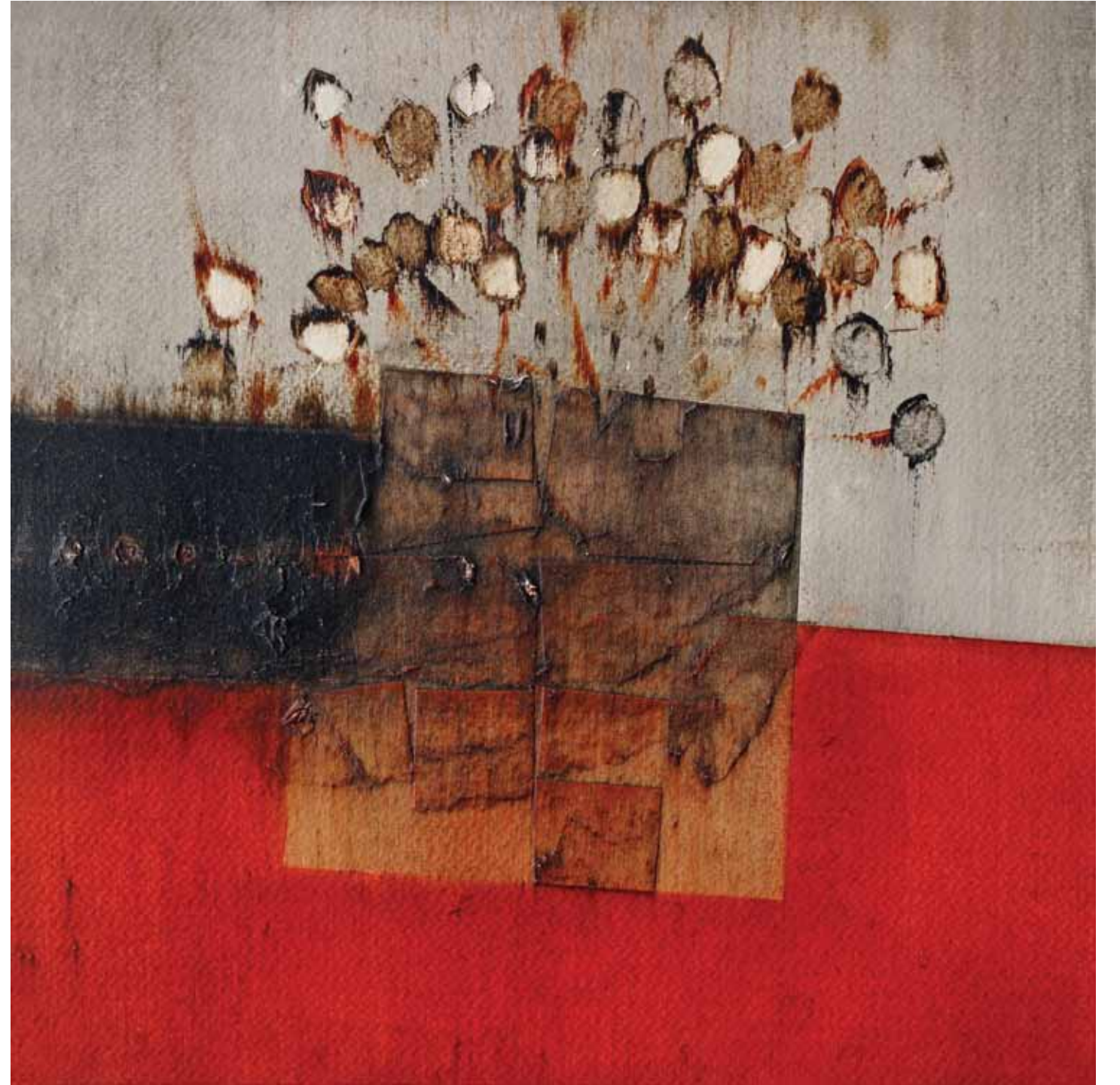


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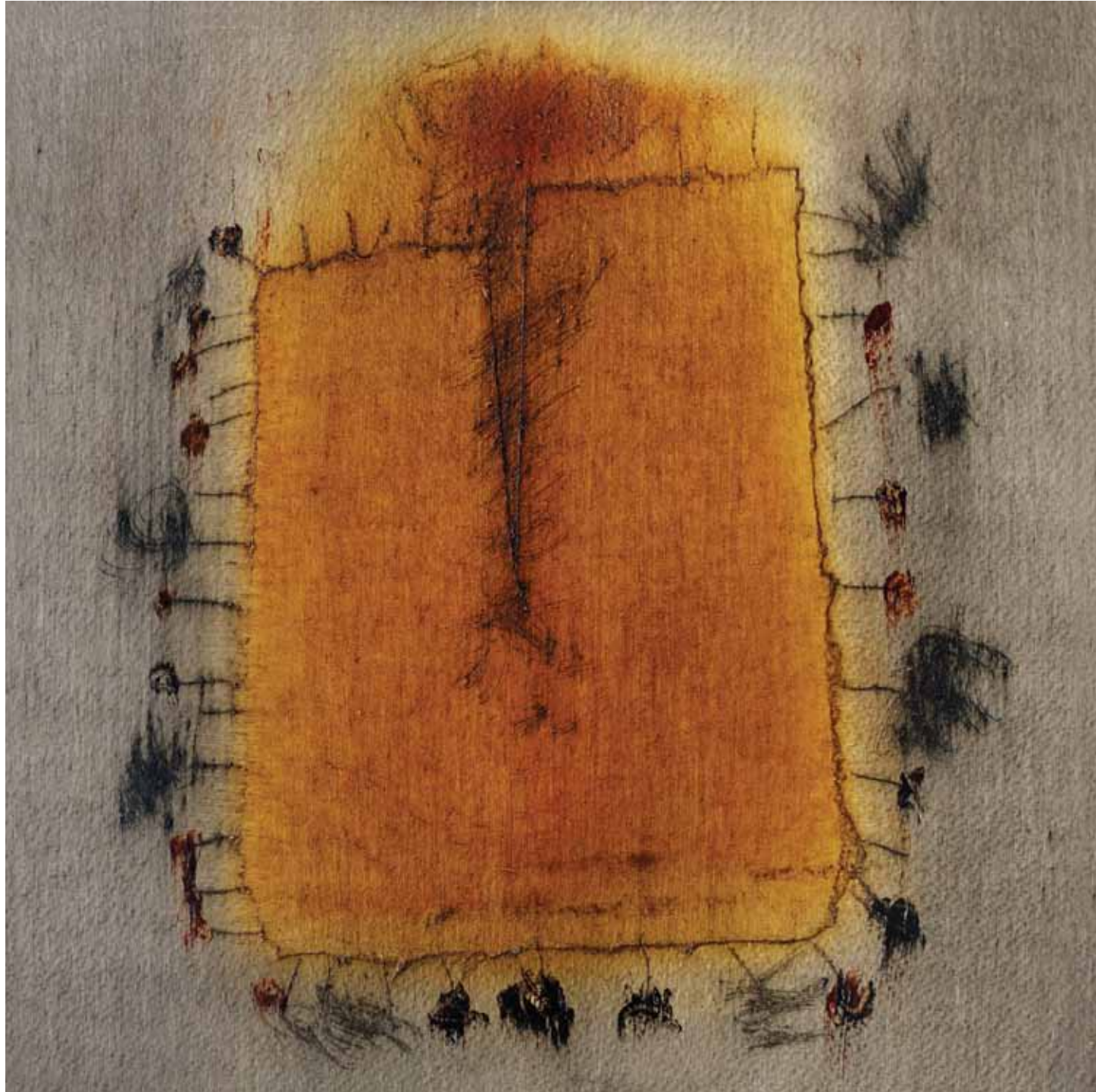


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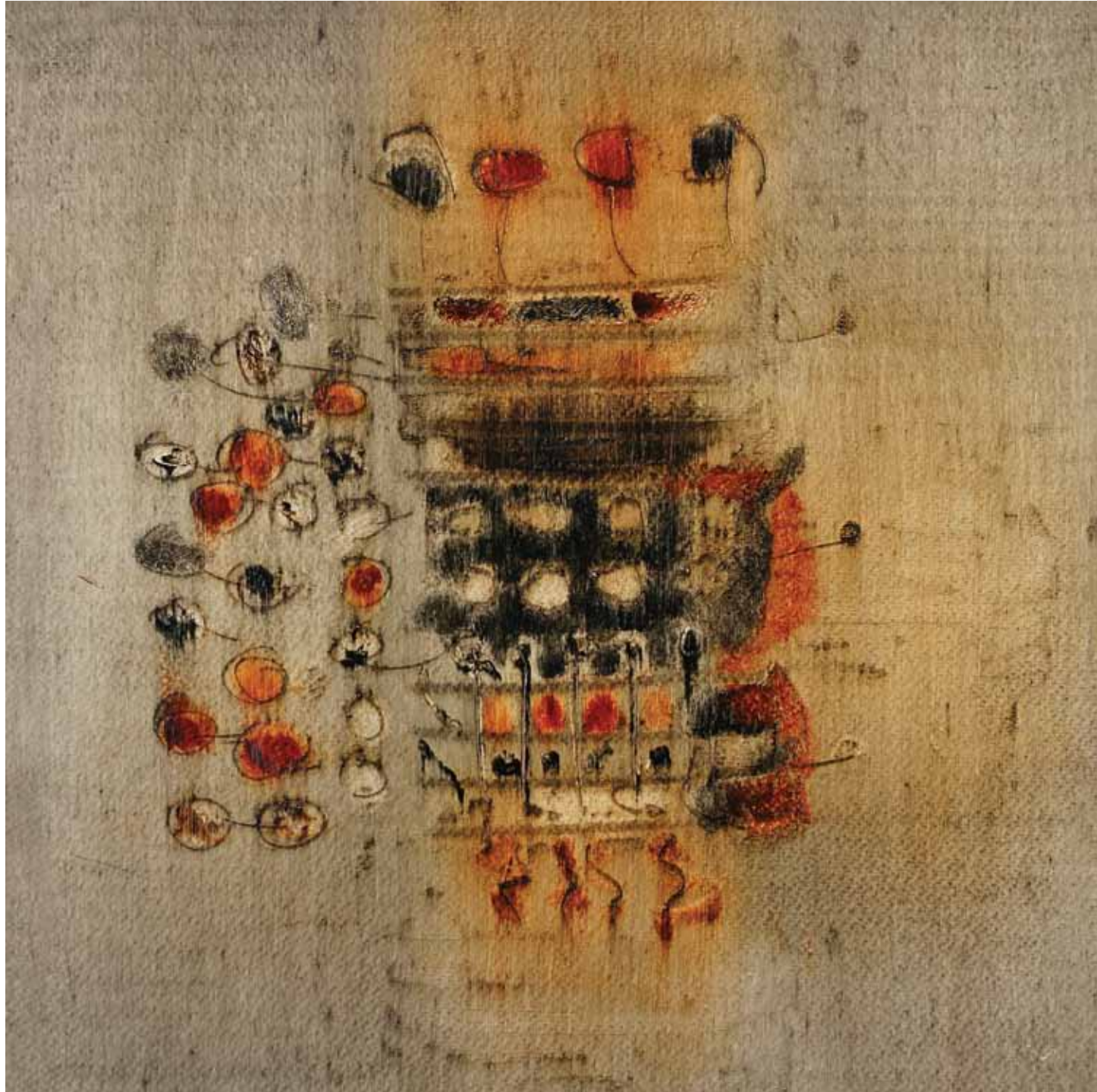


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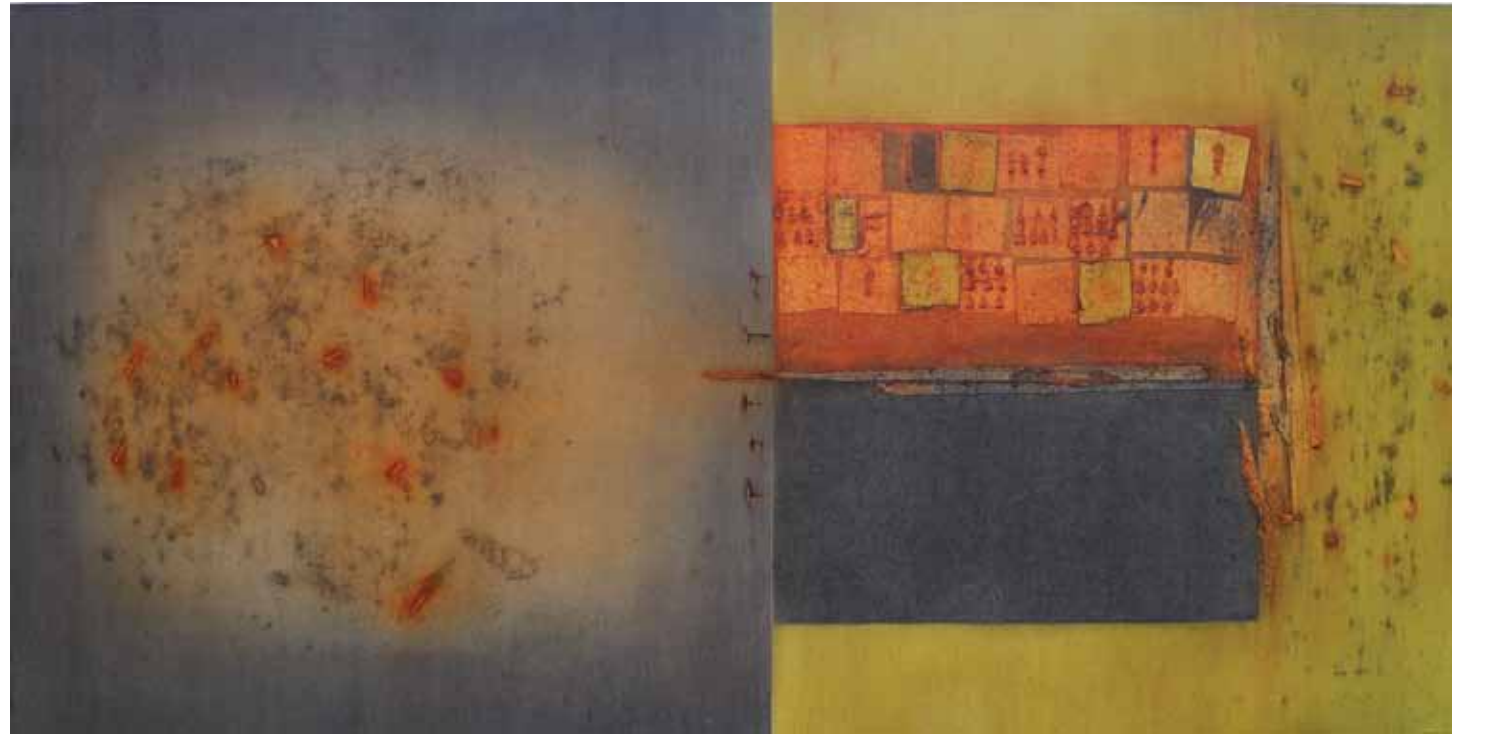


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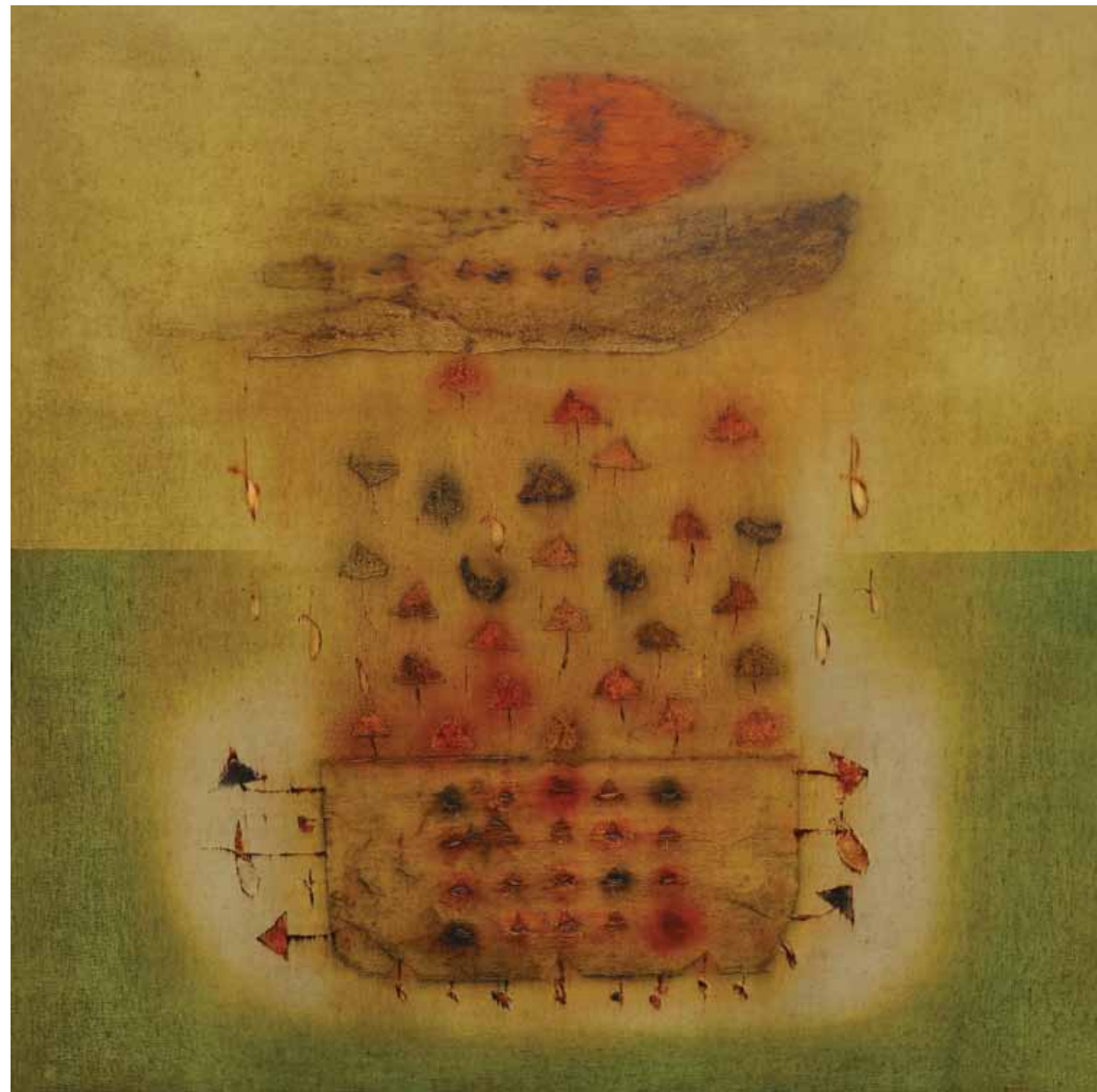


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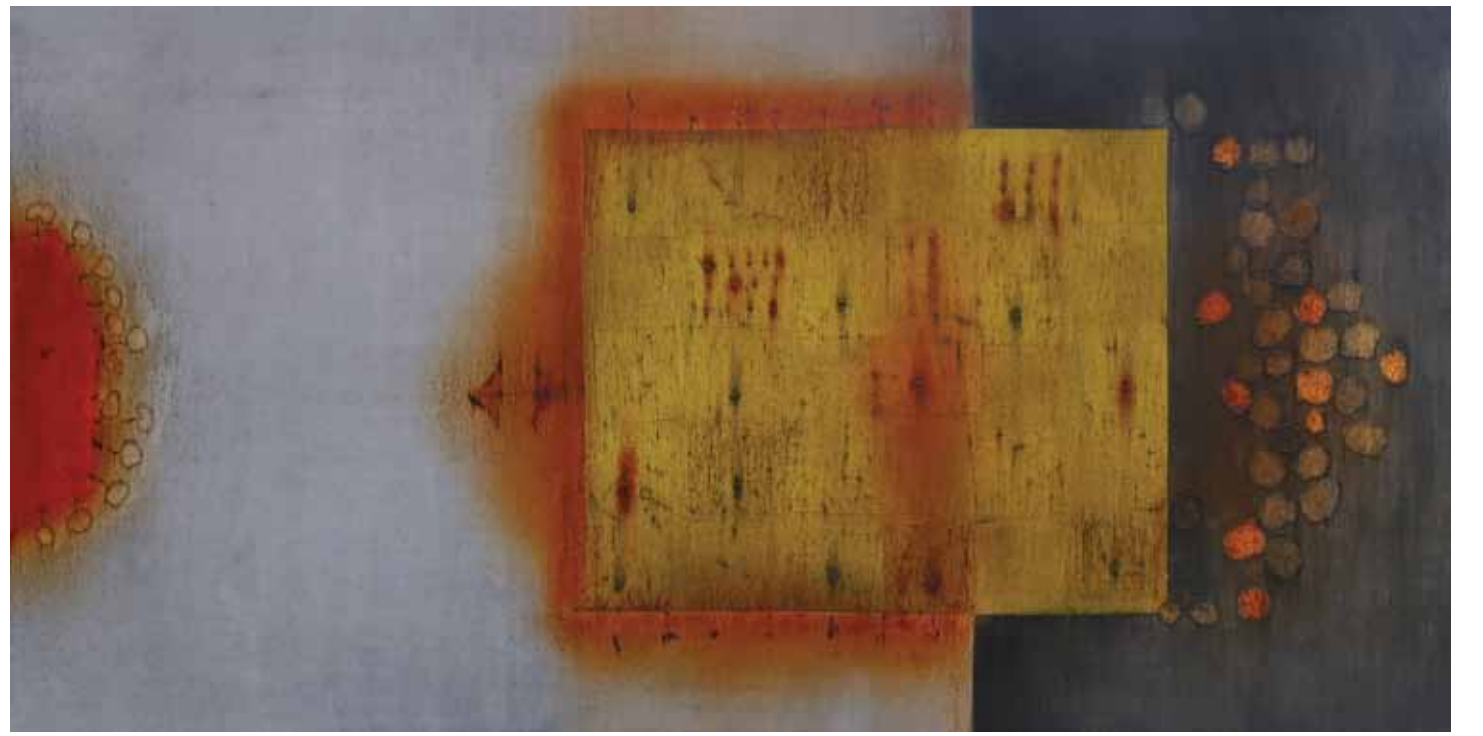


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Untitled | Oil on canvas | 30" x 60" | 2019





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ANANT NIKAM

1962	Born at Ambejogai, Dist. Beed (M.S.)
1983	Awarded G.D. Art (Painting) First Class, Govt. School of Art, Aurangabad.
1985	Dip. A Ed. Sir. J.J. School of Art, Mumbai.

GROUP SHOWS

1989	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.
1987-88	Indian Oil Bhavan, Mumbai.
1988-89	Bajaj Art Gallery, Mumbai.
1990	Chemould Art Gallery, Mumbai.
1990	York Street Gallery, Melbourne, Australia.
1992	“Im Prints” – Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.
1992	International show Com – Art, Korea
2000	“Sacred Space” Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai.
2000	“Indian Printmakers” Organized by Scottish Academy of Asian Art show at Intermedia Gallery, Finge Gallery, Glasgow.
2000	Juxtapose’ an exhibition of paintings by artist couples at Son-et-Lumiere Art Gallery, Mumbai.
2001	Gallery III Glasgow Print Studio, Scotland.

2003	“Glasgow Print Exhibition” Goa, Ahmedabad, Pune, Baroda & Mumbai.
2004	Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata.
2005	Charity Show for Tsunami at NGMA, Mumbai.
2005	“Present Future” Show NGMA, Mumbai.
2007	“Colour of Life III” CPAA, Cymroza Gallery.
2012	Dedicated to Prof.Somnath Hore print exhibition, Shanti Niketan.
2014	“Creating Impressions” Art and Aesthetic, Delhi
2015	Mini Prints Show at Panaji, Goa
2015	Indian printmaker show in Seoul National Art Museum, South Korea
2015	“Rethinking the Regional ” by Dr Manisha Patil at NGMA, Mumbai
2016	“Creating Impressions” IHC and Art and Aesthetic, Delhi
2016	111 Expressions print show by Prof K Salve at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
2016	Conglomeration Print exhibition at Darbar Hall art center Kochi
2017	Hub - 9 Exhibition at MSU, Baroda
2017	‘Bombay Black’ by Sumesh Sharma at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
2017	Conglomeration #2 An International Exhibition of Prints at Kerala Lalitkala Academy Art Gallery, Kozhikode, Kerala.
2018	Hub – 10 Tale of Two Cities Exhibition at MSU, Baroda
2020	‘Confluence a print show ‘An exhibition of prints by artist from India and Bangladesh at India Habitat center New Delhi curated by Lubana Sen

SOLO SHOWS

1989-93	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.
1994	Taj Art Gallery, Mumbai.
1997	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.
2000	Diara Art Gallery, Hyderabad.
2000-03	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.
2007	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.
2012	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.
2016	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai.
2020	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai “Memories of Significance” Curated by Johny ML.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENT

1984	Fellowship at Govt. School of Art, Aurangabad.
1984	Participated in Krishna Reddy’s Print Making Workshop held in Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai.
1986	Maharashtra State Art Exhibition, Mumbai.
1987	Maharashtra State Collection Award in State Art Exhibition, Mumbai.
1987	‘Honorable Mention’ First Bharat Bhavan International Biennial of Print, Bhopal (M.P.)
1989	Participated in Print Work Shop organized in Bharat Bhavan Bhopal
1989	Participated in Bombay Art Society’s Centenary Year Exhibition, Mumbai
1990	“Honorable Mention” 34th National Exhibition of Art, Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi.
1990	Participated in multimedia camp at Shimla organized by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
1992	Award Fourth Bharat Bhavan Biennial of Contemporary Indian Art, Bhopal.
1992	Participated in print camp Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi.
1993	Fellowship – Department of Culture Govt. of India, New Delhi.
1995	All India graphic Camp, Bharat Bhavan Bhopal.
1996	Graphic camp organized by at the British council at Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai.
1997	‘50 years of Independence’ Exhibition of Mumbai Artist organized by N.G.M.A, Mumbai
1997	Participated Harmony Show, Mumbai.
1999	Serigraphy – Camp organized by W.Z.C.C., Udaipur.
2000	‘Ideas and Images, N.G.M.A., Mumbai.
2001	Selected – Link Exchange, Glasgow Print Studio and Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai.
2001	“International Art Festival” at Edinburgh, Scotland, UK.
2001	As an expert conducted print making workshop at Glasgow print studio Scotland, UK.
2006	Printmaking workshop –LKA Chennai Centre, Vishakhapatnam.
2008	Art Festival organized by Sela Qui World School, Dehradun.
2011	As an expert conducted print making workshop in Bharati Vidyapeeth College of fine arts, Pune.
2011	Appointed an external examiner for M.F.A / B.F.A Printmaking at I.K.S.V.V, Khairagarh.
2012	Appointed an external examiner for B.F.A Printmaking at Visva Bharati Shanti Niketan, West Bengal.
2012	Shanti Niketan printmaking workshop “Uttarayan art foundation ” Vadodara, dedicated to Prof.Somnath Hore
2012	Participate “Multiple encounter –second edition” an exhibition of Indo-American Prints, New Delhi.

2013	Palette-2013 –Edelweiss Foundation, Alibaug.
2016	Cartist Automobile Art Festival curated by Johny ML, Jaipur.
2017	Krishi Kala Utsav at ICAR-NAARM, Hyderabad.
2017	The National Artist Camp Dept, The Fine art university of performing & visual art, Rohtak, Haryana.
2017	Participated in10th Triennial Mondiale De l’estampe, Charmalieres-France
2017	Indira International Imprint Art Festival, Graphic Department, Indira Kala Sangit University, Khairagarh, Chhattisgarh
2017	Multiple Encounters organizing exhibition at Shilpakala Academy National Academy of art and Culture, Bangladesh
2018	Krishi Kala Utsav at ICAR-NAARM, Hyderabad.
2018	Art Heart Camp at Chinmaya Vibhooti at Kolvan, Lonavala.
2018	Printmaking workshop organized by Uttarayan, Vadodara.
2018	Participated in 1st Print Biennale by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
2018	‘AKHI’ National Art Camp, organized by College of Fine Art, Thiruvananthapuram.
2018	Printmaking Workshop Lithography and Viscosity at Government College of Art and Design, Nagpur
2018	National Printmaking Camp at College of Fine Arts, Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath.
2018	Participated as invitee of 7th Biennial of Contemporary Indian Art Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal.
2019	Participated in National SCRAP Sculpture/Painting/Printmaking Camp at Sir J.J.School of Art, Mumbai. Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, in Joint collaboration with Sir J.J.School of Art Mumbai.
2019	Akhil Bhartiya Chhapa Shibir Bharat Bhawan, Bhopal.
2019	International Non-Toxic Printmaking Workshop cum Seminar Indira Kala Sangit University, Khairagarh, Chhattisgarh.
2019	Lithography Workshop at Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai In Collaboration With Chhapkhana Group, Nagpur.
2013-2018	Prof. Krishna Reddy’s Retrospective Show Curated by Anant Nikam and Sumesh Sharma at Mumbai, Delhi, Baroda, Pune, Goa, Patna, Nagpur, Sanghli, Shantiniketan, and Hyderabad in period 2013 to 2018

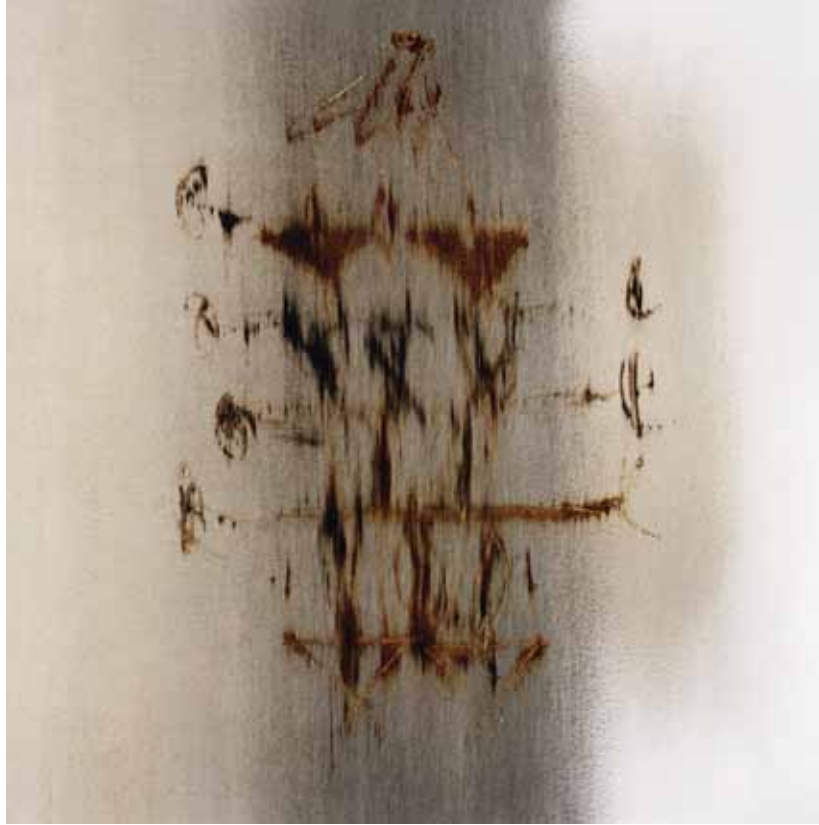
Painting & Prints in Collection

Bharat Bhavan Bhopal (M.P.),
Roopankar Museum of fine Art
National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi,
Directorate of Art, Mumbai, XAL – Praxis Foundation, Mumbai,
Govt. Museum of Chandigarh,
Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi.
Uttarayan, Baroda.
W.C.Z.C.C., Udaipur.

Many other paintings / prints collection in India and Abroad. Regularly Participating in India and Abroad.

Anant Nikam  
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*Special Thanks To:*

*Johny ML, Sushma Sabnis, Dr. Mrudula Thakkar, Anwar, Anil Naik,  
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*Photography by: Uday Kawale*